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Agricultural Marketing Service

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

PA-19 Revised June 1959

NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM

What It Is

The National School Lunch Program encourages school children to eat more nutritious lunches. It carries out the objectives of the National School Lunch Act—"to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation's children, and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food."

Who Operates It

The Agricultural Marketing Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the provisions of the Act, with the cooperation of the State Departments of Education. Within the States and Territories, the Departments of Education administer the program, and sign agreements with schools for the operation of individual programs.

The laws of a number of States do not permit the State educational agency to administer the program in nonprofit private or parochial schools. In those States, such schools may enter into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to operate a program.

How It Started

The idea of serving lunches to school children is not new. Long ago, in many communities, local groups recognized the need for school lunches. The programs they established were the beginning of the National School Lunch Program.

The Federal program of food assistance to school lunch programs began in the fiscal year 1936. Surplus commodities, which had been purchased by the Department of Agriculture to stabilize farm prices, were made available to schools for use in nonprofit lunch programs.

The National School Lunch Act, of June 4, 1946, authorized Federal assistance to school lunch programs in the form of a State grant-in-aid program, providing for both cash and food assistance.

Who Is Eligible

Public schools and nonprofit private schools (such as parochial, sectarian, and denominational schools) of high school grade or under may apply for Federal aid. To be eligible for participation, schools must agree to:

- Operate the lunch program on a non-profit basis;
- Serve lunches that meet the nutritional standards established by the Secretary of Agriculture;
- Provide lunches free or at a reduced cost to children who are determined by local school authorities to be unable to pay the full price of the lunch. Children receiving free or reduced-price lunches must not be so identified, nor otherwise discriminated against in any way.

Cash Assistance

Federal funds for the School Lunch Program are apportioned among the States to be used in reimbursing schools for part of the cost of the food they purchase. The amount of money each State receives depends on the number of school-age children in the State and the per capita income of the State. Federal funds expended in a State for the purpose of reimbursing schools must be matched with funds from sources within the State (including appropriated funds, children's payments, donated services, etc.) at the rate of three dollars for each Federal dollar.

Reimbursement from Federal funds is made monthly to the schools. The amount of Federal cash assistance that a school may receive depends on the need for assistance, the number of lunches served, and the amount spent for food. The maximum rate of reimbursement that may be paid per lunch is nine cents. No reimbursement is paid for lunches served to teachers or to other adults.

Food Assistance

Most of the food used in the School Lunch Program is purchased locally by the participating

schools. However, under a provision (section 6) of the National School Lunch Act, the U.S. Department of Agriculture buys and distributes to schools taking part in the National School Lunch Program, foods that are of high nutritive value suitable for children's lunches.

In addition, from time to time, the Department makes available to all eligible nonprofit school lunch programs, foods which are obtained under authority of legislation to widen the market outlet for farm products.

The "Type A" Lunch

Children should get real enjoyment out of lunch at school, and the National School Lunch Program helps to make a wholesome, appetizing lunch available to the Nation's school children every school day. These lunches, it is generally recognized, make an important contribution to the good nutrition so vital during a child's formative years. The Program results, therefore, in improved national health, and increased consumption of the products of our farms.

Lunches served under the National School Lunch Program, in order to be eligible for reimbursement, must contain as a minimum:

- 1. One-half pint of fluid whole milk as a beverage.
- 2. Two ounces (edible portion as served) of lean meat, poultry, or fish; or two ounces of cheese; or one egg; or one-half cup of cooked dry beans or peas; or four tablespoons of peanut butter; or an equivalent quantity of any combination of the above-listed foods. To be counted in meeting this requirement, these foods must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other menu item.
- 3. A three-fourths cup serving consisting of two or more vegetables or fruits or both. Full-strength vegetable or fruit juice may be counted to meet not more than one-fourth cup of this requirement.



- 4. One slice of whole-grain or enriched bread; or a serving of cornbread, biscuits, rolls, muffins, etc., made of whole-grain or enriched meal or flour.
- 5. Two teaspoons of butter or fortified margarine.

A lunch based on the above pattern is known as a "Type A" lunch, for which Federal reimbursement is authorized.

How to Apply for the Program

For additional information on taking part in the Program, and for applications to participate, persons interested in the Program for all public schools should write to their State educational agency, at their State capital.

Likewise, persons interested in the Program for nonprofit private and parochial schools in the following States should also write to their State educational agency, at their State capital:

Alaska
California
Connecticut
District of Columbia
Georgia
Illinois
Indiana
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Massachusetts
Mississippi
Missouri

New Hampshire
New Mexico
New York
North Carolina
Oklahoma
Oregon
Puerto Rico
Rhode Island
South Dakota
Vermont
Virgin Islands
Wyoming

In the following States, as explained previously, the State educational agency is not permitted by law to administer the program in nonprofit private and parochial schools. Applicants should write to the Department office listed:

Northeast:

Delaware Maine Maryland New Jersey Pennsylvania West Virginia Food Distribution Division Agricultural Marketing Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 139 Centre Street New York 13, New York

Southeast:

Alabama Florida South Carolina Tennessee Virginia Food Distribution Division Agricultural Marketing Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 50 Seventh Street NE. Atlanta 23, Georgia

Midwest:

lowa Michigan Minnesota Nebraska North Dakota Ohio Wisconsin

Food Distribution Division Agricultural Marketing Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 431 South Dearborn Street Chicago 5, Illinois

Southwest:

Arkansas Colorado Texas Food Distribution Division Agricultural Marketing Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 500 South Ervay Street Dallas 1, Texas

Western:

Arizona Guam Hawaii Idaho Montana Nevada Utah Washington

Food Distribution Division Agricultural Marketing Service U.S. Department of Agriculture 630 Sansome Street San Francisco 11, California

